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AUTHOR Emery, Ken
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ABSTRACT

This resource packet was created to allow teachers to easily select from some of the short works of Naguib Mahfouz, probably Egypt's most famous and prolific writer, that will familiarize students with the author and his world. The packet first gives an overview of the life and work of Mahfouz, citing seven sources for further information. The resource packet is then divided into two parts: (1) "Introduction" and (2) "The Stories." The introduction suggests Internet activities that teach about Cairo (Egypt) and Islam. It offers ideas for student research on 20th century Egypt. Part 2 contains eight short stories (translated into English from Arabic) which reflect a broad range of Naguib Mahfouz's writings. (BT)

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The World of

Naguib Mahfouz

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The World of Naguib Mahfouz

OBJECTIVE: This resource packet was created to allow teachers to easily select from some of the short works of Naguib Mahfouz, probably Egypt's most prolific and famous writer. The teacher will then be able to familiarize the students with the author and his world.

> **"Through works rich in nuance, now clear-sightedly realistic, now evocatively ambiguous—[Mahfouz] has formed an Arabic narrative art that applies to all mankind."**
>
> **—Swedish Academy of Letters**

Biography

Naguib Mahfouz was born the son of a middle-class merchant in Cairo in 1911 in the Gamaliyya district, one of Cairo's most picturesque districts. He attended public schools, and graduated from Cairo University in 1934 with a degree in philosophy. Mahfouz has spent his life in Cairo and moves from it only once a year, to spend the hot summers in seaside Alexandria. Only twice in his life has Mahfouz been abroad, and after his second trip he vowed never to travel again. He began writing at the age of seventeen. He published his first novel in 1939 and wrote ten more before the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952, when he stopped writing for several years. The appearance of the Cairo Trilogy (*Palace Walk*, *Palace of Desire*, and *Sugar Street*) in 1957 made him famous throughout he Arab world as a portrayer of traditional urban life. With his novel *The Children of Gebelawi* in 1959 he began writing again, in a new vein that frequently concealed political judgements under allegory and symbolism.

Until 1972, Mahfouz was employed as a civil servant, first in the Ministry of Mortmain Endowments, then as Director of Censorship in the Bureau of Art, next as Director of the Foundation for the Support of the Cinema, and finally, as consultant on Cultural Affairs to the Ministry of Culture. The years following his retirement from the Egyptian bureaucracy showed further creativity, much of it experimental. He is now the author of between thirty to forty novels, half of which have been made into films which have circulated throughout the Arab world. His volumes of short stories numbering more than one hundred individual stories contain some of the best in Arabic literature—it is the short story which has been the preferred genre since the first attempts at fiction writing in Arabic were made in the early Twentieth Century. Since his winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988 his work has been extensively translated and published throughout the world. This newfound status has also brought Mahfouz criticism from the increasingly intolerant Muslim fundamentalist movement. This culminated in an unsuccessful, yet violent attack, when he was stabbed in Cairo in 1994. He lives in Cairo to this day where he continues to write.

Mahfouz's Writing

The popularity of the fiction of Naguib Mahfouz in Egypt and the Arabic-speaking world can hardly be exaggerated. The barely literate and the highly educated alike read his work; his name is a household word. Like their author, his stories never travel abroad, not even to the Egyptian countryside with its peasant life, which has been the subject of many Egyptian writers. Many of his novels and stories are sited in that square mile or so which makes up the districts of Gamaliyya and al-Hussein, an area which includes the vast bazaar known to tourists as Khan-al-Khalili, with its numerous mosques, cafes, small shops, and traditional character.

Mahfouz had meant to write a whole series of novels encompassing the full history of Pharaonic Egypt; he even did the research required for such a monumental task. Perhaps luckily for the development of the Arabic novel, he was voluntarily deflected from his intended course and the scene of his next novel, "A New Cairo" (1945), was set in the reality of its day. This marks the beginning of the second stage in the writer's career, which culminated in the publication in 1956-1957 of his masterpiece, "The Cairo Trilogy". In this period of his writing, the novelist studied the sociopolitical ills of his society with the full analytical power afforded him by the best techniques of realism and naturalism. What emerges from the sum total of these novels is a very bleak picture of a cross section of Egyptian urban society in the twenty or so years between the two world wars. For his Trilogy, the peak of his realist/naturalist phase, the Egyptian people will forever stand in their great novelist's debt. For without this colossal saga novel, in which he gives an eyewitness account of the country's political, social, religious and intellectual life between the two wars, that period of turmoil in their nation's life would have passed undocumented.

Just as his realistic novels were an indictment of the social conditions prevailing in Egypt before 1952, the novels of the sixties contained much that was overtly critical of that period. In the years following 1967, his writing ranged from surrealist, almost absurd short stories and dry, abstract, unactable playlets, to novels of direct social and political commentary. This period from 1967 to 1971, following Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, was a bad one for Mahfouz. During these dark years he gave up writing novels and turned to the short story. In many of the stories he wrote during this time—among his best and blackest—death is central. Referring to these stories, he has remarked that he could never conquer the idea of dying until he wrote about it. In the West, as religion becomes increasingly a social function or merely part of the cultural background, many people like to think that they are masters of their fate. The East, particularly the Islamic East, knows better. The Koran tells the Muslim that a person's life span lies in God's hands, emphasizing that every soul must taste death. Not surprisingly, death plays a leading role in the lives of the characters that Naguib Mahfouz creates.

This tendency to divide Mahfouz's writings into a number of periods, e.g. a historical, a realistic and a metaphysical-mystical has not happened without reason. However, the illumination throughout of human life in general should also be emphasized.

"If the urge to write should ever leave me, I want that day to be my last."
—Naguib Mahfouz

Sources and For Further Information on Naguib Mahfouz

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Part I Introduction

A. Before beginning reading any of Naguib Mahfouz stories it would be best to introduce the students to his world and the world of his characters—the Gamaliyya and al-Hussein districts. Short of a field trip to Cairo, a virtual field trip will have to do. Tour Egypt is a nice site for this purpose. It is intended for tourists, but it contains some good information, and nice graphics. The web address for this site is **<www.cairotourist.com/cairoislamic.htm>**. This virtual tour of Islamic Cairo includes links to many of the major sites in the two districts.

Suggested Activities:

- Use the site to create a multimedia presentation of Islamic Cairo
- Have students access the site individually or in small groups, to research and present a site in Islamic Cairo. The web site would be a good starting place, and they could continue their search in the library or to other web sites.
- In small groups students could access the site and create an illustrated map of Islamic Cairo, or a subsection of it. They could print out pictures and maps from the site to use in this project.

B. In order to better understand the characters and setting of Mahfouz's stories this may be a good time to review or instruct the students on the beliefs and practices of Islam. Following is a brief summary of some of the beliefs and practices of Islam. This could be used in either lecture or handout form.

ISLAM in Brief

Introduction
Islam is the name of the religion founded in Arabia in around 610 A.D. by a man named Mohammed. The word Islam means submission. Muslim is the term used for a follower of the religion of Islam. The word Muslim means one who submits. Muslims believe they must submit their will to God--Allah. The Five Pillars of Islam refer to essential duties of every faithful Muslim. Islam has no formal church or clergy. All worshipers are considered equal. They may pray alone or assemble at a mosque, the Muslim meeting place. At the mosque, an imam leads the worshipers in prayer. There are approximately one billion Muslims in the world.

Who is a Muslim?
All that is required to become a Muslim is to state the declaration of faith in public by saying, "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger."

What do Muslims believe?
Muslims are monotheistic, believing in one god--Allah. Allah, is simply the Arabic word for God, not a particular name.

Muhammad accepted the Old and New Testaments as God's world. He called Jews and Christians "People of the Book" because they believed in God's revelations in the Bible. Muslims recognized a close relationship with Jews and Christians. Some teachings of Islam are similar to those of Judaism and Christianity. Islam, however, reveres as sacred only the message, rejecting Christianity's deification of the messenger. In terms of Christianity, Islam accepts the virgin birth of Christ, but not the title "Son of God", instead using the title "Son of Man." Islam accepts the concepts of guardian angels, the Day of Judgment, general resurrection, heaven and hell, and eternal life of the soul.

Muslims believe in predestination. This means that Allah has planned out everyone's life. When something goes wrong Muslims often say "Inshallah" meaning it is the will of Allah. Being a Muslim also involves a commitment to realize the will of God on earth and to obey God's law.

Prophets
Muslims believe in the prophets of Judaism and Christianity. They believe that Abraham, Moses and Jesus were prophets and great teachers; but Muhammad, as God's final messenger, has the highest authority.

Mohammed is the "Seal of the Prophets"; his revelation is said to complete for all time the series of biblical revelations received by Jews and Christians. Muslims believe God to have remained one and the same throughout time, but that men strayed from his true teaching until set right by Mohammed. Prophets and philosophers of the biblical tradition, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, are recognized as inspired vehicles of God's will.

Practices

The duties of the Muslim form the five pillars of Islamic faith.

Profession of Faith (Shahada)

The first pillar in accordance with Islam's absolute commitment to monotheism, the first duty is the profession of faith (the Shahadah): "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet." This profession must be made publicly by every Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime "by the tongue and with full assent from the heart"; it defines the membership of an individual in the Islamic community.

Prayer (Salat)

The second pillar is that of five daily prayers. The first prayer is offered before sunrise, the second in the very early afternoon, the third in the late afternoon, the fourth immediately after sunset, and the fifth before retiring and before midnight. In prayers, Muslims face the Kaaba, a small, cube-shaped structure in the courtyard the great mosque of Mecca. Before praying, the worshiper must make ablutions, a cleansing.

Five times a day the muezzin (from azan, "call to prayer") makes a formal public call to prayer from a minaret of the mosque. In recent times the call has been made over a microphone so that those at some distance can hear it.

Almsgiving (Zakat)

The third pillar of faith is to pay zakat, the giving of a portion of their income to a charity. This usually goes to the poor, the building and maintaining of mosques, and school scholarships.

Fasting (Sawm)

The fourth pillar is the fast during the month of Ramadan. During the fasting month, one must refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual intercourse from dawn until sunset. Throughout the month one must abstain from all sinful thoughts and actions. Those who can afford it must also feed at least one poor person. If one is sick or on a journey that causes hardship, one need not fast but must compensate by fasting on subsequent days.

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

The fifth pillar is the pilgrimage to the Kaaba at Mecca. Every adult Muslim who is physically and economically able to do so must make this pilgrimage at least once in his or her lifetime.

Prohibitions

Besides the Five Pillars, other important laws of Islam include the prohibition of alcohol consumption and of eating pork.

The Koran

Muslims rely on the Koran, the holy book, for guidance in all matters. The Koran was written in Arabic, as a result Arabic became the universal language of Muslims from many different cultures. Muslims regard the Koran as the speech of God to Muhammad, mediated by Gabriel, the angel of revelation; they believe that God himself, not Muhammad, is the author and therefore that the Koran is infallible. The document called the Koran is the collection of the passages revealed to Muhammad during the approximately 22 years of his prophetic life. (610-32). It is divided into 114 chapters of unequal length.

The Sunna

The second substantial source of Islam, the Sunna, or example of the Prophet, is known through the body of traditions based on what the Prophet said or did regarding various issues. The transmission of Hadith was largely verbal, and the present authoritative collections date from the 9th century. Unlike the Koran, Hadith is not considered infallible.

Festivals

One of the happiest Islamic holidays is Eid al-Fitr, which means Festival of Fast Breaking. It comes at the end of Ramadan and lasts three days. During Eid al-Fitr, people wear their best clothes and go to the mosques to pray. Afterwards, they eat holiday meals, exchange gifts, and visit relatives.

Divisions in Islam - Sunnis and Shi'ites

There are two main sects in Islam—Sunnis and Shi'ites. The Sunnis make up approximately 95% of the world's Muslims. The Sunnis are the mainstream or orthodox Muslims. Sunnis follow the traditional path shown by Mohammed directly from Allah.

Today there are approximately 165 million Shi'ites who live predominantly in Iran and Iraq. This division came about following the death of Mohammed. Shi'ites believe that Ali, Mohammad's son-in-law, was his legitimate political heir. The Shiites believe in a series of 12 infallible imams beginning with Ali. The 12th and last leader disappeared in 880, and Shiites await his return, at which time the world will be filled with justice.

C. To complement a study of the stories of Mahfouz students could conduct research on Twentieth Century Egypt

1. Have students construct a timeline on Egypt in the Twentieth Century. Some possible sources for this timeline would be the world history text, encyclopedia, library, or on-line sources.
2. Have students research and present a significant individual or event in the history of Egypt in the Twentieth Century. Some possible topics would be:

-World War I in Egypt
-British Protectorate Period
-Egyptian Nationalism
-World War II in Egypt
-Wafd Delegation
-1948 war with Israel
-The coup of 1952
-The 1956 Suez Canal Crisis
-The Six Day War
-Yom Kippur War
-Egypt's Peace Treaty with Israel
-Sa'ad Zaghloul
-King Farouk
-Mustapha el-Nahas Pasha
-Gamal Abd al-Nasser
-Anwar Sadat
-Hosni Mubarak

Part II The Stories

During the creation of this resource attempts have been made to choose stories that reflect a broad range of Mahfouz's writings. No attempts have been made to analyze the stories; the focus has been on providing a short summary of each story to allow the teacher to quickly choose which story or stories they would like to pursue.

Among the stories included are two short stories—**"The Mosque in the Narrow Lane"** and **"Hanzal and the Policeman"** both written in the early 1960s. These stories touch upon two questions: the problem of true identity, and the difficulty of coming to terms with one's environment.

"Zaabalawi" introduces the reader to a world of uncertainty, frustration, and contradiction. A world inspired by Sufism—Islamic mysticism, in which Mahfouz is well read.

"The Norwegian Rat," written in the 1980s is a tale where the Egyptian leaders are under analysis.

The next story entitled **"At the Bus Stop"** an absurd, gloomy, cynical story written in 1969 perhaps reflects the period in Egyptian history following Egypt's loss to Israel in the 1967 war.

"A Man and the Other Man" written in 1979, and **"The Time and the Place"** written in 1982, contains happenings that can only be explained in supernatural terms, the former seems to create a world subject to many laws, not just one, while the latter creates a Thousand-and-One-Nights atmosphere.

"The Answer is No" written shortly prior to his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988 has a feminist theme.

*Due to copyright law, the text of the stories for this resource cannot be included. However, a summary of each story along with the bibliographical information for the collection or collections where the story can be found has been included.

"The Mosque in the Narrow Lane"

The timing of this story is World War II—the 1940s. Skeikh Abdu Rabbuh has been appointed Imam of a mosque on the outskirts of the red light district. He is resentful of this transfer, but against his wishes he finally resigns himself to accept the post. The mosque stands at the crossroads of two lanes—one known for debauchery and the other houses pimps, prostitutes and drug dealers. It appears to the Skeikh that the only pious man is Am Hassanein, the fruit-juice man. One day the Sheikh is summoned to the office of the Inspector General in charge of Religious Affairs. Fearful that he will be held accountable for his congregation the Skeikh prepares himself for the meeting.

Once at the meeting the Sheikh, along with the other Imam's present are told that it is their duty to show their loyalty to the Royal family, and in the wake of problems facing the country the Imams are instructed to enlighten the people. It appears that the way to enlightenment is through exposing all imposters and agitators so that the Royal family can be firmly established in power. Relieved that he is not being help accountable for his actions, the Sheikh realizes that what he will be forced to say at the Friday sermon goes against his own conscience and will be hated by his people. He leaves the inspectors office wondering what he should do.

Later he discovers that some of the other imams have been dismissed from their posts for refusing to take part in the campaign that had been thrust upon them. At this point, from fear of dismissal the Sheikh decides to go against his own beliefs and deliver the sermon he has been instructed to give. On Friday, he goes through with it, and as his congregation revolts police informers began to take away the most vocal dissidents. The Skeikh then attempts to use his "patriotism" to exploit the situation to his own advantage—with hopes of a promotion.

When it comes time for the afternoon sermon, not a single person shows up. He sees Am Hassanein across the lane, when the Sheikh call to this devout man he turns away. The Skeikh walks away ashamed of himself for calling to Am Hussanein, and cursing the man for ignoring him.

At prayer the next morning as the *muezzin* climbs the minaret and morning prayers begin the air-raid siren begins its howl, and an explosion rocks the lane. Many of the neighborhood's "rabble" file into the mosque, as the public shelter is too far off. The Sheikh makes every attempt to send them off to the public shelter to no avail, telling them they are defiling the house of God. Finally, the Skeikh decides that God has some plan in bringing all these people together, and since he wants no part of it, he chooses to flee the mosque amid the dropping bombs.

The body of Sheikh Abdu Rabbuh was not discovered until after sunrise.

Source: Manzalaoui, Mahmoud, ed. *Arabic Short Stories: 1945-1965*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press. 1992.

ISBN # 977 424 121 5

"Hanzal and the Policeman"

Hanzal hears the sound of heavy footsteps—the police constable is approaching. He wants to run, but cannot. He pleads, "Constable, have mercy on me, for God's sake." Hanzal, a drug addict, fearfully awaits the policeman's blow, but it doesn't come, rather he feels the touch of a compassionate human hand. Much to Hanzal's surprise, when he is taken to the police station rather than the usual punishment he is told that new conditions call for a change of treatment...a change in everything. Hanzal is taken away to a sanatorium where he leaves a new man.

After his release from the sanatorium, the new Hanzal is taken back to the station and asked by the Superintendent what his wishes are for his new life. Hanzal after some encouragement states that he wishes a fruit shop, and the money to begin anew. He asks for Saneyya Bayoumi, a bold and pretty girl not yet married who had deserted Hanzal. Hanzal also fears that this pleasant behavior by the police will not last, but he is assured that he will find no enemies among the police. So Hanzal now has his shop, his love, and the friendship of the police.

Hanzal continues unselfishly to tell the officer that there are many more poor like himself. The officer takes down their name and assures Hanzal that each will have his own shop, love, and the friendship of the police. Hanzal then questions how many prisoners really deserve to be in prison, and the officer assures him that all that do not deserve it will be released. Hanzal exclaims cries of joy at this new situation.

Next, while in the arms of his beloved Saneyya, feels a strange sensation—a pressure on his throat. Hanzal awakens to find the police constable with his heavy booted foot on Hanzal's chest, who had fallen asleep in the middle of the road. The police constable's voice sounded rough and merciless. When Hanzal asked him about the Superintendent's promises the policeman kicked him. Hanzal looks around and realized it all been a dream.

Source: Manzalaoui, Mahmoud, ed. *Arabic Short Stories: 1945-1965*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press. 1992.

ISBN # 977 424 121 5

"Zaabalawi"

The man needs to find Sheikh Zaabalawi, he had heard of the man in his childhood from his father. His father described Zaabalawi as a true saint, a remover of worries and troubles. The man now afflicted with an illness decides to seek Zaabalawi out, but no one seems to know where he can be found. The man travels from person to person, and place to place with no success. The man continues on his quest hopeful that he will find Zaabalawi. One man tells him that he must go on a systematic search, and draws him a map of the Quarter. Every person he encounters sings the praise of Zaabalawi, but none seem able to help him locate the Sheikh.

On his quest he happens upon a man—Hagg Wanas, as he approaches Wanas and speaks to him Wanas will listen to nothing until the man drinks and gets drunk just as Wanas is. The man, not a drinker finally agrees, and proceeds to drink himself into a stupor. He finally awakens and questions why his head is wet. When he is told that a man named Zaabalawi was sitting with them and Zaabalawi feeling pity for the drunken man sprinkled water on his head to bring him around. The man returns night after night hoping to find Zaabalawi to no avail. However, he does not give up, he continues on his quest—he must find Zaabalawi.

Source:

Mahfouz, Naguib. *The Time and the Place and Other Stories.* Selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

"The Norwegian Rat"

The tenants of the building meet to discuss their current problem, an infestation by the Norwegian rat. A problem so large, that it was even being televised. The tenants complained, "They're not ordinary rats; they're even attacking cats and people." The tenants have been given instructions, which if they follow meticulously will eradicate their problem. The tenants attend a series of meetings, at each they are given clear instructions on how to get rid of this menace.

Eventually, someone notices that these instructions are closing up their homes tighter and tighter, making them like a prison cell. To this they are told that they are at war and this is a state of emergency. The tenants continue to carry out their duty. The tension of this eventually leads to quarrels between tenants and even between family members.

Finally, some good news arrives a group of experts have been assigned to the problem. A bureaucrat inspects the building and instructs the concierge to inform him of the appearance of any rat—be it Norwegian or Egyptian.

The concierge escorts the bureaucrat on his inspection, at which time the bureaucrat is invited to dinner. Much to the dismay of host and hostess they soon discover that as the bureaucrat continues to eat he comes to resemble the Norwegian rat himself.

Source:

Mahfouz, Naguib. *The Time and the Place and Other Stories.* Selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

ISBN # 0-385-26472-0

"At the Bus Stop

A small group of people find themselves huddled under a bus stop shelter in the midst of a storm. Some were awaiting a coming bus, others were simply trying to stay dry. They suddenly notice a man racing by followed by a group of men and boys shouting "Thief!...catch the thief." They witness the group catch the man and brutally beat him while a policeman stands by apparently not even noticing. Next, the men tire of beating the thief, the thief stands and appears to be making a speech. Two cars come by at breakneck speed, they crash and go up in flames again unnoticed except by those at the bus stop. The thief then begins to take off his clothes, while continuing with his speech, as those who had been beating him gather around and clap to a rhythm and spin around in a continuous circle. Those at the bus top come to the conclusion that his must be a scene from a film being made.

The group continues to watch this scene unfold as: a man and a woman perform a love scene in the street over the dead body of one of the car drivers, a caravan of camels arrives led by Bedouins, a group of foreign tourists enters the scene, followed by a many construction workers who proceed to build a mass grave. Some at the bus stop feel that they should leave, but others encourage them to wait for the happy ending. This mayhem continues to escalate until a man with a magnifying glass arrives; the group asks him if he is the director, but he fails to respond. Suddenly, a severed human head gushing blood comes rolling towards the bus stop, to the horror of the group there.

Finally, the group calls the policeman over, who unhappily comes. He begins to question their motives for being there. He asks for their identification cards. Again he asks what the purpose of their meeting is—they explain that they do not even know one another. He tells them they are lying. He takes a few steps back, aims his rifle, and fires, killing them all.

Source:
Mahfouz, Naguib. *The Time and the Place and Other Stories.* Selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

ISBN # 0-385-26472-0

This story can also be found under the title "Under the Bus Shelter" in:
Kassem, Céza, and Malak Hashem, ed. *Flights of Fantasy: Arabic Short Stories.* Cairo: Elias Modern Publishing House. 1996.

ISBN # 9775028809

"A Man and the Other Man"

A man is following another man through the streets as the man being observed goes about his business. He visits the fuiterer's, meets a woman on the street and exchanges a whispered conversation, stops for a shoeshine, gets into an argument on the street, stops in a toy shop, and plays a game of backgammon with a friend. The observer watches intensely while following along, trying to be unnoticed. At times, he poses questions to himself about the man he is observing.

Finally the time is at hand, the observer follows the observed into an elevator and stabs him. He quickly exits the scene of the crime and makes his way to a bar where he quickly falls asleep and dreams a long dream. Upon leaving the bar he sees the police and a large crowd in front of the building where he had stabbed the man in the elevator. He returns to his hotel room only to find the man he stabbed sitting in an armchair. Fearful and confused he questions his sanity or sobriety. The man orders him to surrender.

Later that night the two men leave together, the man who had been stabbed in charge. Outside the hotel they arrive at a carriage without a horse. The man in charge climbs in the carriage and takes a seat, the other man takes the place of the horse and pulls the carriage away. No one on the street notices anything strange.

Source:
Mahfouz, Naguib. *The Time and the Place and Other Stories.* Selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

ISBN # 0-385-26472-0

This story can also be found under the title "The Man and the Shadow" in:
Kassem, Céza, and Malak Hashem, ed. *Flights of Fantasy: Arabic Short Stories.* Cairo: Elias Modern Publishing House. 1996.

ISBN # 9775028809

"The Time and the Place"

A man sits alone in the home of his youth, he and his siblings have inherited the home, and due to family problems chosen to sell it. Suddenly a bright light flashes, and a person appears who presents him with a glass of wine and tells him to "Accept the gift of a miracle." He is miraculously transported to the same location, but in the past where he witnesses a man offering him a box saying, "These are the days of insecurity." He must bury the box in case the house is searched. The scene vanishes as quickly as it appeared—but it does vanish from the man's mind, it is the center of this attention.

The man decides that he will stay in the house and not sell it, much to his brothers and sisters dismay, so that he can search for the box buried so long ago. He begins digging and locates the buried treasure box. Inside is a letter telling him that the house is a safe refuge for the "Believers," and that he must seek out the Master Arif al-Baqallani. His curiosity gets the better of him and he sets off, centuries too late, to seek the home of al-Baqallani.

He locates the house and is met outside by two men dressed in European garb. He questions them about al-Baqallani, but they are quite convinced that he has come for some illicit meeting. They seize him and take him inside. His dream quickly becomes a nightmare. Once inside he encounters a man handcuffed and several others like the two who had brought him in. No matter what he tells them they are convinced that he is part of some suspicious activities. Out of desperation he decides to tell them his story since they will believe nothing else he tells them.

He shows the letter to the men who decide that it must be a code and that Arif al-Baqallani must be his code name. He is handcuffed and detained. In the silence, he sees the situation from a new vantagepoint, and his only response is laughter.

Source:

Mahfouz, Naguib. *The Time and the Place and Other Stories.* Selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

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"The Answer is No"

A young female teacher is told that the new headmaster has arrived. As much as she wanted to she could not avoid going with the other teachers to congratulate him. The time came, she could not even look him in the eye, wordlessly she stretched out her hand to congratulate him, she then left the room. She went about her daily duties and everyone thought her to be in a bad mood. It wasn't until she arrived at home that she spoke of the situation. She tells her mother that Badran Balawi has been appointed as headmaster.

Badran Balawi had been her tutor when she was fourteen, he was twenty-five years her senior. One day he had taken advantage of her and when she asked in terror what had happened he assured her that he would come and propose the day she came of age. He did keep his word, but she refused him. Deciding that a life without marriage is preferable to being married to him. During her life, she had marriage offers from time to time, but she prefers to keep her secret to herself.

Finally, back at school the first time she and Balawi are alone he questions her, about how she is doing, to which she responds coldly with "I'm fine." He continues to question her to see if sh ever married to which she responds simply with "I told you, I'm find."

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